



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Kevin Flanagan – (916) 574-8167

BSIS Issues License Guide as Part of Effort to Curb Unlicensed Activity

Sacramento Police to Help Distribute Pamphlet to Law Enforcement Statewide

SACRAMENTO – In a continuing effort to protect consumers from people working in the security industry without the required licenses, the Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS), has produced a pamphlet to help law enforcement recognize a valid license.

"As the state law expands and the number of security guards that need to be licensed in California grows, it's important that police officers and the public know what our licenses look like. We hope our pocket guide will make a difference," says Paul Johnson, Chief of the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services, which oversees nearly a quarter million licensees.

The *Guide to License Types* displays pictures of the registrations or licenses for security guard, proprietary private security officer, alarm company employee, private investigator, repossession agency employee and locksmith, as well as the permit to carry an exposed firearm. The guide also describes pertinent facts about each license, such as whether the license must be carried on the job and if the licensee must wear a uniform.

Police officers will often check the licenses of guards and other professionals they encounter during their rounds. Johnson said the guide will help remind officers

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that in most cases, both the companies and the people who work for them — security guards, and locksmith, reposessor and alarm company employees, for example — must be licensed and that employees must carry their license while working. The guide can be seen on the BSIS Web page at www.bsis.ca.gov/forms_pubs/pocket_guide.pdf

Johnson said a training video, still in the early development stages, is also in the works.

The training video, a joint project with the Sacramento Police Department, will instruct sworn law enforcement personnel on how to handle situations in which they encounter people who are operating without the proper BSIS license, and why licensing is important. Johnson said the video presentation will be designed to be shown during roll call at law enforcement agencies up and down the state.

"Those employed as security guards, locksmiths, alarm technicians, and private investigators warrant a significant level of the public's trust. Ensuring authentic credentials in these professions are of great concern for consumers and law enforcement alike. The guide and video guide will serve as resources to effectively combat this problem," said Albert Najera, Chief of the Sacramento Police Department.

Unlicensed activity is a great concern for BSIS and other licensing agencies at the Department of Consumer Affairs. Under California law, it is often a criminal offense to work at a licensed occupation without the proper license and as such must be prosecuted in the criminal courts. However, BSIS and other agencies at DCA, are administrative bodies that must rely on local criminal justice authorities to prosecute unlicensed activity cases. But catching people operating without a license is difficult, given their number and the fact that they often leave little identifying information behind. Moreover, the attention of local criminal authorities is often focused on more serious crimes, unless the unlicensed activity is especially egregious.

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Over the past two years, representatives from BSIS have visited nearly 900 businesses where BSIS licensees may be employed — from small locksmith shops, nightclubs and residential communities to major amusement parks — talking to owners about laws affecting them, as part of an outreach effort designed to stem unlicensed activity.

For example, a law enacted in 2005 and effective in 2006, requires security guards who do not work for private patrol companies — so-called “proprietary” guards that work directly for the person or business they were protecting — to be licensed. Many companies that employed proprietary guards were unaware of the new law until they were visited by a BSIS official.

All of BSIS' efforts are effective in helping protect the public, Johnson said. However, the most effective means is still in the hands of the consumers themselves: verifying the licenses of the people with whom they do business, checking either with the Department of Consumer Affairs online license verification system, which can be accessed through the DCA home page at www.dca.ca.gov or by calling the Department's Consumer Information Center toll-free at (800) 952-5210.

Note to editors: Oxnard Police recently discovered nearly a dozen unlicensed guards working a local event. Oxnard PD doesn't post its press releases on its Web site, but it can be viewed here: <http://www.calsaga.org/documents/PressRelease-11SecurityOfficersArrestedinOxnard.pdf>